

## An Unforeseen Poverty

By: Johnny K. Hughes

In my travels throughout the Native American communities and reservations, I can't help but notice the poverty that exists. When I cross into many of these areas, I feel the oppression and the pain of hopelessness. Moving down neighborhood streets my eyes are drawn to the men sitting on the curbs, porches and fence rows, nothing for them to do but drown their sorrows and feelings of inferiority in a bottle of liquor.

I have asked myself many times, "why?" Having talked with many of these men, they feel a sense of shame and worthlessness. There is something inside them that tells them that what they are doing is wrong, but they are just following the example that was set before them by their fathers and grandfathers. You see, for generations, the Native men were the ones who hunted and provided for their families, but today everything seems upside down. God placed man as the provider for the family and the head of his household and when God's order is altered, chaos enters and the family unit becomes fragmented.

Due to the fact that there are very few places for employment on most reservations, unemployment rates are at a staggering 50% to 85%, men have seemingly lost their role and are wandering aimlessly. When there is no work and no means of providing, I see how the enemy can attack the spirit of the man and cause him to feel worthless and inferior. This has caused women to step into the family leadership roles, and even in the churches there is a shortage of men who are trained in the Word.

I can quote you statistics like 80% of Native households are affected by alcohol or drugs and over 50% are living below the poverty line, but the reality is, there is a greater poverty issue in front of us today. Of the approximately 2.5 million full-blood Native Americans in the United States today, almost 95% of them do not claim to be Christians. Let's put this into reality for the Church. If Christ returns today, there would be over 2,375,000 Native Americans who would be eternally separated from God in a place called Hell. This is the reality of the desperation facing Indian Ministries of North America. God has called us to GO, not to just make converts, but to make disciples. (Matt. 28:19) It is our focus to teach, train and raise up leaders from the communities and the churches to return order to the family and the church.

The Spirit is calling us. Do you hear Him? There are fields that are hard and in need of the breaking of a plow. There are fields that have been plowed and are in need of sowing. There are fields where the harvest is tender and growing, and there are fields that are white with the harvest. The Spirit is calling us. Do you hear Him? He who hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church. (Rev. 2:29, 3:22) I must be about my Father's business, and that is reaching the First People of this country with the life giving, hope building Gospel of Jesus Christ. I need you. God needs you. 2,375,000 Native Americans need you to respond to the call of the Spirit. Please join with Indian Ministries of North America today and bring in the HARVEST.